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## Rendering Atelier Culture Online: Lessons in inclusion from low-residency visual art programs

### Student Dissertation

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## MON: Rendering Atelier Culture Online: Lessons in inclusion from low-residency visual art programs (Hugo Teixeira)

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9 February 2015

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[Hugo Teixeira](#)

13 January 2015

<https://prezi.com/0l2gmvcyhcki/>

Imagine, if you will, a spectrum of learning cultures. On one side is the traditional culture of schools, efficient and modular, but mired in abstract symbols and static truths (Brown, 1989). On the opposite end is situated cognition and a learning culture in which students support each other as co-apprentices of a master teacher, engaging in authentic activities and dynamic situations (Brown, 1989). In this environment, apprentices display unfinished work publicly, participate in the struggles of their peers, and absorb the public critiques by the master of each individual's work. The result is an intimate knowledge of the work being done by all one's peers and the ability to interpret the depth and subtleties of the master's critiques (Brown, 2007). Learning is magnified in this environment.

It might also be considered time-consuming and inappropriate to a formal learning environment. How can the average practitioner induct her students into an atelier culture of learning when faced with institutional or personal biases? Must these students be excluded? On the other hand, how do working adults who wish to advance their atelier practice as artists, architects or designers find the time to hone their craft in the rich atelier setting?

Enter the Low-residency MFA program. In it we may just find a successful compromise. Master of Fine Arts programs are popular among working adults who want to teach art at the tertiary level or otherwise advance their practices. In contrast with the challenges identified above, the culture of artistic practice complements the learning culture in fine arts education well. Working artists simply trade one atelier for another. The challenge lies in individuals' availability to uproot themselves from their communities and dedicate two or more years to research and practice at a college of fine arts. These demands exclude many working adults. Universities have met this challenge by offering low-residency options, where students continue to practice in their own communities and studios, coming together with their cohort and professors only a few weeks a year. Outside these short residency periods, communities of practice (Wenger,

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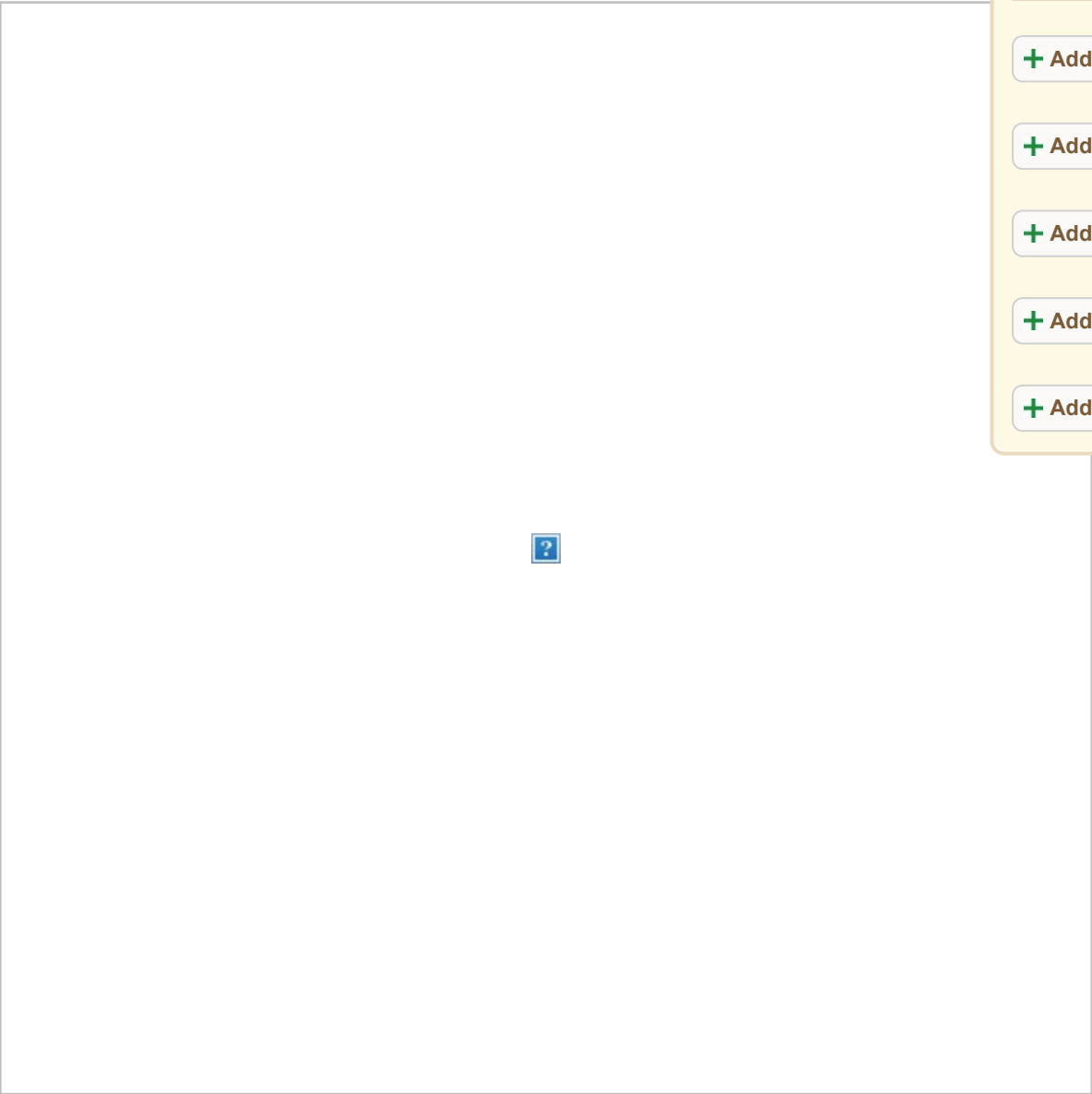
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1998) play a key role in extending the atelier environment beyond geographical and temporal bounds. The result is the inclusion of many adults who would otherwise not be able to pursue graduate studies.

The presentation seeks to engage the audience by way of an animated film that will first explore how non-traditional students are included on a Low-residency MFA, and then ask how this model might work for an adult student of English as a foreign language. Ultimately, by exploring how this challenge has been tackled from the opposite end of the learning culture spectrum, I hope to convince the audience more students might be included in this valuable culture of learning..


## Extra content



 [Hugo Teixeira](#)  
22:05 on 13 January 2015 (Edited 22:09 on 13 January 2015)

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<b>Low-Res MFA programs</b>	
<b>New Hampshire Institute of Art</b>	<a href="http://www.nhiamfa.com/about/about-our-mfa/">http://www.nhiamfa.com/about/about-our-mfa/</a>
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<b>Maine College of Art</b>	<a href="http://meca.edu/mfa/mfa-program">http://meca.edu/mfa/mfa-program</a>
<b>San Francisco Art Institute</b>	<a href="http://www.sfai.edu/degree-programs/graduate/low-residency-mfa">http://www.sfai.edu/degree-programs/graduate/low-residency-mfa</a>
<b>Lesley University</b>	<a href="http://www.lesley.edu/mfa/visual-arts/low-residency/">http://www.lesley.edu/mfa/visual-arts/low-residency/</a>
<b>Pacific Northwest College of Art</b>	<a href="http://pnca.edu/about/c/facts">http://pnca.edu/about/c/facts</a>
<b>Massachusetts College of Art and Design</b>	<a href="http://www.massart.edu/Admissions/Graduate_Programs/MFA_Fine_Arts_(Low-Residency_in_Boston).html">http://www.massart.edu/Admissions/Graduate_Programs/MFA_Fine_Arts_(Low-Residency_in_Boston).html</a>
<b>School of Visual Arts</b>	<a href="http://www.sva.edu/graduate">http://www.sva.edu/graduate</a>
<b>Maryland Institute College of Art</b>	<a href="http://www.mica.edu/Programs_of_Study/Graduate_Programs/Studio_Art_(Online_and_Low-Residency_MFA).html">http://www.mica.edu/Programs_of_Study/Graduate_Programs/Studio_Art_(Online_and_Low-Residency_MFA).html</a>
<b>Vermont College of Fine arts</b>	<a href="http://www.vcfa.edu/visual-art">http://www.vcfa.edu/visual-art</a>
<b>The University of the Arts</b>	<a href="http://studioartmfa.uarts.edu">http://studioartmfa.uarts.edu</a>
<b>School of the Art Institute of Chicago</b>	<a href="http://www.saic.edu/academics/graduatedegrees/lowresmfa/">http://www.saic.edu/academics/graduatedegrees/lowresmfa/</a>

## ARTISTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED LOW-RESIDENCY MFAs

**John Donaldson, Vermont College of Fine Arts**

<http://zappertista.com/>

**Denise Philipbar, University of the Arts**

<http://denisephilipbar.com>

**Sara Maria Salamone, Parsons The New School for Design**

<http://saramariasalamone.com/>

**Jenna Miller, School of Visual Arts**

<http://www.jennamillerphotos.com>

**Ed Drew, San Francisco Art Institute**

<http://eddrew.com/>

**Stacey Piwinski, Lesley University**

<http://www.staceypiwinski.com/>

### Other Links

**Mashable Media Summit**

<http://mashable.com/media-summit/>

**Tor Myhren Profile**

<http://grey.com/us/about/leadership/myhren-tor/73>

**Tor Myhren presentation @ 2011 Mashable Media Summit**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfruZ9N\\_\\_IA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfruZ9N__IA)

**Simone's Story**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQRdIZR\\_LYY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yQRdIZR_LYY)

**Professional Artist Magazine**

<https://www.professionalartistmag.com>

**Rachel Rutherford's Blog**

[http://rachel\\_rutherford.blogspot.com/2010/07/mfa-in-interdisciplinary-arts-at.html](http://rachel_rutherford.blogspot.com/2010/07/mfa-in-interdisciplinary-arts-at.html)

**Art&Education**

[http://www.artandeducation.net/school\\_watch/making-sense-is-radical-to-making-art-the-bard-mfa/](http://www.artandeducation.net/school_watch/making-sense-is-radical-to-making-art-the-bard-mfa/)

**The Chronicle of Higher Education**

<http://chronicle.com/>

**Storyboard That**

<https://www.storyboardthat.com/userboards/hugoteaches/rendering->

atelier-culture-online

## Student Animated Films

<http://hu.goteach.es/post/102244669831/lv-store-visit-final-project>

## GoAnimate

<http://www.goanimate.com>



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

06:12 on 9 February 2015

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## Embedded Content

[Accessible Alternative](#)

added by [Hugo Teixeira](#)

**Presentation materials (with missing opening and closing images!) now available on SlideShare for your viewing pleasure.**

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## Contribute

**Discussion (19)**

[Links \(0\)](#)

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[M.M](#)

10:48pm 14 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This is something I have no knowledge and very little experience of so I will be keen to see the end result. The animated film sounds refreshing and will be a nice way to explain your online atelier culture. As I remember commenting on the poster design, I only learnt the word 'atelier' from your poster and therefore will be keen to complete my learning with your presentation.



[Lisa Kidger](#)

2:42pm 16 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hugo, you have a very intriguing short abstract and, like Marese, I liked the idea of an animation at the beginning of the presentation (now wondering how it could do that in mine...). Lisa



[Jocelyn Anderson](#)

8:40pm 24 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This looks really interesting Hugo. I am particularly intrigued by the idea of how this model might be applied to a different type of student/subject - it makes me wonder if a similar model might also be developed for special-subject researchers/Higher Education lecturers' professional development; my impression (admittedly formed largely through anecdotal evidence) is that this can also be difficult to develop within the geographic boundaries people work in. Hopefully I will be able to take Monday morning off to hear more about your project!



[Samantha Marks](#)

9:50am 27 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hugo, I am very much looking forward to hearing your presentation and pulling out some of the key ideas and approaches. Distance education students, I believe, are often given more support or expected to do more 'off their own backs' than 'regular' campus students, and I think there may be a lot to learn. I also like the idea of learning from different fields or professions. Last year I took a different module and found that there were lessons to take away and be used in this field.



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

1:19pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thanks everyone. I didn't expect there would be so much interest in this subject! I've learned a lot during my research, namely that 'online' doesn't play much of a role at all in low-res MFA programs. The focus of these programs seems to be building communities of artists, not only through ICT, but especially face-to-face in the students' local communities and across the country. Technological innovation seems to play a minor role, but these programs excel at including diverse and distant students in rich patterns of interaction. I am very tempted to enroll in one myself.

I've actually been debating whether to change my title to exclude the word 'online' but I think I'll include it. The word can also describe a system that is active ("The power is online."). Similarly, students on these programs are 'active' in that they and their practices are included in these greater atelier communities, with the help traditional networking practices as well as computer networks.

Is this too much of a stretch? I welcome your comments.



[matthew street](#)

6:40pm 28 January 2015 (Edited 6:40pm 28 January 2015) [Permalink](#)

Hi Hugo,

I found this really engaging and when I was reading it I was thinking of something that John Seely-Brown described as 'tinkering' which if memory serves he described as the concept of working openly, engaging with peers and accepting critique to create new

knowledge from within networks, I think he drew on the design studio as an analogy. Have you found whether tools like Twitter support the approach you are looking at?

Best

Matt



[Jane Ballans](#)

8:41pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This is a fascinating subject area and I'm intrigued to see the starting video. Jane



[Jane Ballans](#)

8:44pm 28 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

This is a fascinating subject area and I'm intrigued to see the starting video. Jane



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

12:24pm 29 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Matt

Reading John Seely Brown certainly inspired me to look into fine art education and start asking questions about how the subject area could be rendered online when the studio component is so central.

No one I've spoken to or read has mentioned Twitter specifically, but Skype, email and community forums have come up. I have also found informal groups (sets?) on Twitter and Facebook, so certainly social media are playing a role. The key seems to be that none of the programs I've encountered prescribe specific ICTs. What they do require is interaction with a community. It's up to the members of that community to figure out how they will do so.



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

3:29am 30 January 2015 [Permalink](#)

I've made some changes to the abstract to address the theme of inclusion more explicitly and to more clearly specify what sort of student/subject area I intend to apply the model to. Thanks Dave for the comments.



[matthew street](#)

11:33am 1 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Hugo,

Thanks for the reply. That is what I've been finding too, so its good to know I havent been looking in the wrong places. Thanks Matt





[Dave Martin](#)

12:17pm 2 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

The research would tend to agree with you Hugo that different groups decide upon different tools to work together; just as individual learners prefer to use the device (smartphone or tablet) of their choice. So which comes first the group or the tool? With the two Fire Services we're coming across via Richard Heffer's work one, Notts, is using Facebook whilst another, Dorset, is using Twitter. Now in their case the group (Fire Service) already existed before the social media tool. But what about groups that did not exist prior to their developing on a tool/social media platform?



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

3:18am 3 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Certainly the group comes before the tool. I had naively assumed that bringing together artists in their own studios across a many countries would require special tools, but that doesn't seem to be the case. The selection of tools is incidental to the task at hand and nature of the group.



[Catherine Dartnall](#)

12:27pm 6 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Hugo

Your project looks quite fascinating - the subject of inclusion with a MFA context, your graphic content and the wonderful language of 'atelier' is quite engaging.

The context of this is a completely new area to me, but the way that you describe increased access and therefore inclusion through linking communities of practice to the atelier approach seems to be very much worth exploring.

I look forward to attending your presentation Hugo.

Catherine



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

2:09pm 10 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Your comments and questions from your live presentation:

- ▶ What will have biggest impact on inclusion do you think?
- ▶ need to help with authenticity of environment for the students
- ▶ Agree - tools that we use should be seamless
- ▶ love the idea of storytelling the outcomes
- ▶ Graphics are wonderful - shows where your art skills come in I think :)
- ▶ how do the low residency courses address cultural differences for their learners?
- ▶ someone mentioned earlier the low completion rate at OU, how do low-residency

course rate?

- ▶ it's interesting that it's always left to the students. I wonder if teachers think about this?



[Jane Ballans](#)

7:45pm 15 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Hi Hugo, I've just listened to the conference recording and your presentation. I particularly enjoyed the very grounded approach you take. What comes across to me is your real understanding of the barriers to participation experienced by adult learners, and the real life issues which lead to adults having to prioritise their time on things other than their own learning. I really like the cartoons and your story board. I now have digital envy!



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

7:28am 16 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thank you Jane! That's very reassuring. I haven't had the courage to go back and listen to myself yet, but I guess I'll have to write a review.



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

9:11am 16 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

- ▶ What will have biggest impact on inclusion do you think?

What I've observed reading about and speaking to the MFA students, and observing my own adult students, the biggest impact will be whether or not the course of study can adapt itself to their own demands on time and resources. If the course of study is too rigid, other demands will draw students away.

- ▶ need to help with authenticity of environment for the students

Exactly, the contrived environment of the classroom is not only too rigid to accommodate the students, it is less effective, I feel, than an authentic environment for learning language. For example, the lessons I learned trying to order food in China have stayed with me. I can't remember the first thing from my classroom lessons.

- ▶ Agree - tools that we use should be seamless

Yes, pedagogical aims dictate the tools, not vice versa. Is this a case of form following function? I'm finding that seamlessness often means designing lessons that 'fit' into students' existing use of technology. This means being adaptable as learning designers, rather than imposing a specific platform or application.

- ▶ love the idea of storytelling the outcomes

I do too. Don't have any research to back me up (yet) but I feel the story is a very powerful tool.

► Graphics are wonderful - shows where your art skills come in I think :)

Thank you! I feel very strongly that a good graphic and prime the mind for whatever 'hard data' you may want to transmit. I've tried to teach myself a little graphic design over the years, and apply what I've learned to the materials I've developed.

► how do the low residency courses address cultural differences for their learners?

I feel I was unprepared for this question. Those people I spoke with made a point of highlighting how important it was to work with people from other walks of life, other parts of the country, or even other countries. My feeling is that the culture of studio art more universal than other fields, and the art market too requires professional artists to reach out internationally. These are also mature students. So those who come to these programs probably already have international experience and the tools necessary to deal with intercultural situations. But ultimately, this is a question that would require more research to be fully answered.

► someone mentioned earlier the low completion rate at OU, how do low-residency course rate?

As I mentioned, I don't have data for this, nor did the issue come up anywhere I could find. The first question that comes to mind is how do OU completion rates for undergraduate and graduate students compare. My feeling is that graduate students come to the table with a clearer idea of what they want to achieve and so their completion rates would be higher. I would also consider the cost of these programs (US\$9,750 to US\$20,550 per semester in 2015 for the programs I looked at) a very effective filter against those who aren't completely committed. Then there is the selection process. These are not by any means 'open' programs and require the candidates to demonstrate mature and recent portfolios. I also found that the more expensive programs are more rigorous in their selection.

► it's interesting that it's always left to the students. I wonder if teachers think about this?

Was this in reference to the choices students make about technology? As a teacher, I think it's much easier to adapt to what the majority of students are using than convince them to use my preferred tool, unless my tool offers a unique functionality the course can't do without. OpenStudio is a good example of a tool that offers functionality I haven't seen elsewhere, and even though I resisted using it at first, I now value it very much.



[Hugo Teixeira](#)

9:11am 16 February 2015 [Permalink](#)

Thanks all for contributing thought-provoking questions and comments!

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